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General Assembly

Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

106th plenary meeting
Monday, 8 July 2002, 11 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-Soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Agenda item 125 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/56/999)

The President: I should like to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/56/999, which contains a letter from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly, in which he informs the General Assembly that 18 Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I should like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years."

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in document A/56/999?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 60 (*continued*)

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Draft resolution (A/56/L.80)

The President: Before proceeding further, I should like to inform members of a revision to the text of draft resolution A/56/L.80. In view of the fact that not all the candidates for the chairmanship of the Main Committees and the vice-presidency for the fifty-seventh session are known at this point, the words at the end of operative paragraph 3 of draft resolution A/56/L.80 — "at least two months before the opening of the session" — should be replaced by the words "as early as possible".

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/56/L.80, as orally revised.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Chen (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services): I should like to inform members that the adoption of draft resolution A/56/L.80 would not give rise to programme budget implications, since no entitlement to support or services would arise before the President-elect takes office as President.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/56/L.80, entitled "Amendments to rules 30, 31 and 99 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly", as orally revised.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/56/L.80, as orally revised?

Draft resolution A/56/L.80, as orally revised, was adopted (resolution 56/509).

The President: Before we proceed to implement the resolution we have just adopted, beginning with the election of the President for the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, I wish to make a few remarks.

The decision we have made today will bring about a change that will have far-reaching implications for the work of not only the General Assembly, but the entire United Nations system. For the first time in the history of this world body, the President and Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly and the Chairpersons of the Main Committees will be elected well in advance, rather than at the beginning, of a session. This change does not merely represent a procedural modification, but constitutes a major step towards strengthening the General Assembly by enabling its President to play his or her role in a much more expeditious and efficient manner.

My personal experience — as was presumably the case with my predecessors — attests to the need to ensure continuity and a smooth transition between presidencies, as well as to better prepare the future President for his or her job. Although the most important period in carrying out the duties of the President is probably the first few months of the session, that is the very time during the one-year term when he or she is least experienced as President. As for me personally, the events following the 11 September terrorist attacks made it even more challenging for me to adjust to the new job, as I had to deal with a number of unexpected and unprecedented contingencies in conducting the business of the General Assembly. That experience convinced me that we should find a better way of selecting and preparing the President of the General Assembly.

The need to strengthen the role of the President has long been discussed under the agenda items entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly" and "Strengthening of the United Nations system". Last year in particular, my predecessor, Mr. Holkeri, conducted a series of informal consultations on this issue, which led to General Assembly resolution 55/285, containing reform measures such as the clustering of agenda items.

Reflecting the desire of Member States to continue this process, last April I announced a plan to start a new round of informal consultations on the revitalization of the General Assembly. So far, there have been four meetings of the open-ended informal consultations, at which we discussed the non-paper by the President and reached agreement on the draft resolution that was adopted this morning. An updated version of the non-paper will shortly be distributed to Member States will be forwarded to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session for continued discussion. I would like to remind members that the effort to reform and revitalize the General Assembly is an ongoing, long-term process, in which we need to be steadfast and patient, progressing step by step and building on past achievements.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my deepest appreciation to the facilitators for this process: Ambassador Gabriel Valdés of Chile, Ambassador Hynek Kmoníček of the Czech Republic, Ambassador Kishore Mahbubani of Singapore, Ambassador Dumisani Shadrack Kumalo of South Africa and, in particular, Ambassador Jean-David Levitte of France, who, in my absence, so successfully chaired the meetings of the open-ended informal consultations on my behalf.

My heartfelt gratitude also goes to the Chairs and members of the Regional Groups for their active participation and cooperation in this process, as well as to the Secretariat for its valuable assistance.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 60.

Agenda item 4

Election of the President of the General Assembly

Election of the President of the General Assembly for the fifty-seventh session

The President: In accordance with the provisions contained in paragraph 3 of the resolution just adopted by the General Assembly, I now invite members of the General Assembly to proceed to the election of the President of the General Assembly for the fifty-seventh session.

May I recall that, in accordance with paragraph 1 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 33/138, the President of the General Assembly for the fifty-

seventh session should be elected from among the Eastern European States. In that connection, I have been informed by the Chairman of the Group of Eastern European States for the month of June 2002 that the Group has endorsed the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan, for the presidency of the General Assembly for the fifty-seventh session.

Taking into account the provisions of paragraph 16 of annex VI to the rules of procedure, I therefore declare His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan of the Czech Republic elected by acclamation President of the General Assembly for its fifty-seventh session.

I extend my sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan.

I now give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan, who has just been elected President of the General Assembly for the fifty-seventh session.

Mr. Kavan (Czech Republic): It is a great honour and privilege for me to be elected President of the General Assembly at its the fifty-seventh session. I am really very grateful to all Member States, particularly the group of Central and Eastern European countries, for the confidence they have placed in my country and in me in this election.

I would also like to highly commend the work of the current President, Mr. Han, the facilitators and other colleagues who worked tirelessly on the resolution that the Assembly has just adopted. This is truly a very important achievement that will ensure the smoother transition of responsibilities of Presidents of the General Assembly and will, of course, enable me, and all future Presidents, to be far better prepared for the demanding tasks ahead.

During my presidency I will be committed to working towards the effective implementation of the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. I will pay special attention to the foremost task of the United Nations: the maintenance of peace and security, including conflict prevention and, of course, the fight against international terrorism. I am confident that regular consultations and mutual cooperation among the principal United Nations organs are crucial for the better functioning of the Organization. I am obviously aware of the need to build on the ongoing process of the revitalization of the General Assembly.

The Czech Republic has always been a strong advocate of the notion of the United Nations, and of its values and its principles. As an active participant in drafting the Charter of the United Nations, Czechoslovakia, later the Czech Republic, witnessed the evolution of the United Nations into an institution whose role in maintaining international peace and security, in cooperating in economic, social and humanitarian areas and in promoting respect for human rights is extremely important and, I believe, irreplaceable.

With the support of the Vice-Presidents, of the Chairmen of the Main Committees and of all my other colleagues, I should like further to enhance our work to facilitate dialogue and consensus-finding in the spirit of constructive cooperation and mutual understanding. I am convinced that I can count on the experience and assistance — of which I want to make full use — of the Secretary-General and his staff. I believe that, together, we can make the work of the General Assembly much more dynamic and results-oriented, the ongoing process of United Nations reform more efficient and the entire United Nations more coherent.

Let me conclude by saying that I look forward to fruitful cooperation with all 189 — soon to be 191 — delegations of Member States in the work of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

The President: I should like once again to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan, on his election as President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly for its fifty-seventh session. I intend to make the most of the two months remaining until the end of the fifty-sixth session to work closely with President-elect Kavan in order to facilitate a smooth and efficient transition between ourselves as well as between our staffs. I hope that that will set a good precedent not only for future sessions of the General Assembly, but also for other institutions of the United Nations system.

Mr. MacKay (New Zealand): I should like, on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, to congratulate Deputy Prime Minister Jan

Kavan on his election as President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. He will undoubtedly bring to that post a wealth of experience and skills and a diverse background, including the positions he has held at the very highest levels of Government. We have every confidence that he will provide the leadership and vision needed at this critical juncture in international relations and in the work of the Organization, and that he will be well placed to build on the impressive legacy that you, Mr. President, will leave from your tenure.

Mr. Huntley (Saint Lucia): On behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, I wish to join other speakers in expressing congratulations to the Deputy Prime Minister of the Czech Republic on his election to the presidency for the fifty-seventh session. I should also like to thank you, Mr. President, for your work during your tenure and to pledge the cooperation of our Group in the period ahead.

Mr. Nteturuye (Burundi) *(spoke in French)*: On behalf of the Group of African States, I wish to congratulate the President-elect of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly and to assure him that the African Group will work hand in hand with him to help him accomplish his noble task. The African Group is convinced that his political experience and his commitment — about which he spoke in his statement before the Assembly — attest to the success that he will enjoy in conducting the work of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. The African Group will do everything possible to ensure that his work is carried out under the best conditions.

Mr. Tomka (Slovakia): On behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, I should like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, on his election to the important post of President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. We are confident that, with his experience both in the political field and as head of Czech diplomacy, he will guide us in our future work and will contribute greatly to the enhancement of the work of the General Assembly. I should like to add that, as a representative of the sister country of Slovakia, I am pleased to see the representative of the Czech Republic elected President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Hadjiargyrou (Cyprus): On behalf of the Group of Asian States, I should also like to join previous speakers in expressing heartfelt congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, on his election to this most important post. We would like to assure him of our full support as he carries out his important tasks. We are certain that the long experience he brings to the office of the President will go a long way towards ensuring a most successful fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

The President: Before adjourning this meeting, I should like to refer to the relevant provisions contained in resolution 56/509 adapted earlier by the General Assembly, in particular to paragraph 3 of the resolution, concerning the election of the Chairmen of the Main Committees for the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

In order for the Main Committees to take the required action, it is necessary to reconvene the Main Committees during the current session. May I therefore take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reconvene the Main Committees during the current session to take the required action to implement the relevant provisions of resolution 56/509, in particular regarding the election of their respective Chairmen for the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly?

It was so decided.

The President: However, as I mentioned earlier, not all the candidatures for the chairmanships of the Main Committees and for the vice-presidencies of the Assembly for the fifty-seventh session are known at this point in time. The Main Committees and the General Assembly will therefore meet at a later date to take the required action, as provided for in resolution 56/509. Members are requested to consult the *Journal of the United Nations* for the times and dates of those meetings. It is my sincere hope that the Chairmen and the other members of the Bureaux of the Main Committees for the fifty-seventh session, as well as the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly for the fifty-seventh session, can be elected as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.